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Nearly 1,600 degrees conferred during Fall Commencement

DECEMBER 11, 2015



Georgia Southern University today held its 24th annual Fall Commencement at Hanner Fieldhouse. Interim University President Jean E. Bartels, Ph.D., RN conferred nearly 1,600 graduate and undergraduate degrees during three separate ceremonies to accommodate the graduating class.

"Your University salutes you on your success and sends you off soaring on the wings of eagles," said Bartels, also taking a moment to recognize the faculty of Georgia Southern and families of graduates.

Approximately 25 doctoral degrees were conferred, along with 340 Master's degrees, 35 specialist degrees and 1,200 Bachelor's degrees from the University's eight colleges. Today was the first time that Georgia Southern recognized "Double Eagle" graduates during a commencement ceremony. The Double Eagle distinction refers to students who have earned two or more degrees, one undergraduate and one graduate degree or two graduate degrees, from Georgia Southern. Before

each ceremony, Interim Provost Diana Cone, Ph.D., asked all new Double Eagle graduates to stand and be recognized and applauded for their new distinction.

Commencement speakers for this year's ceremonies included Kathy Bradley, an author, speaker and prosecuting attorney living and working in Bulloch County; Lonice Barrett, special assistant in the Office of Gov. Nathan Deal, executive director of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Foundation and a 50-year alumnus of Georgia Southern; and alumnus Maj. Gen. Leslie C. Smith, deputy to the Inspector General for the Office of the Secretary of the Army.



Lonice Barrett

Barrett, who addressed graduates in the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, College of Science and Mathematics, Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology and College of Health and Human Sciences, explained how teamwork would be crucial in life, and that certain intangible things were important to being a team player.

"You graduates will likely start in some positions ... where you're going to be third, or fourth or second chair. You're going to be

working with a group of folks counting on you to contribute as a team. My bottom line on it is don't forget the intangibles: make yourself valuable, look for opportunities to show your personality, your skills and your ability to work hard and get the job done."

Bradley spoke to graduates of the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies and College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and offered up the "top five" things the world needs from the new graduates, referring to them as the BuzzFeed generation.

Bradley said of her first tip to keep reading, "Keep pouring into your brain ideas that challenge your assumption, keep expanding the boundaries of your cerebral geography and keep stretching your intellectual muscles and

feeding your imagination with thoughts and ideas, with words and stories that make you exclaim out loud."



Kathy Bradley

She also said practicing saying “I don’t know” is important because “‘I don’t know’ is where curiosity is born, and curiosity will feed you when nothing else will.” Taking chances, remembering where you came from and paying attention to everything were other pieces of advice she offered.

“Paying attention is a skill that will make you a good employee, a trustworthy companion, nurturing parent and a human being who will one day be able to say, like ... Diane Ackerman, that you have lived not just the length of your life, but the width of it as well,” she said.



Maj. Gen. Leslie C. Smith

Similar to Bradley, Smith encouraged graduates in the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, College of Education, College of Business Administration and the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health to remember several tips when beginning their professional lives.

“The first thing to do to be a professional is to trust,” Smith said. “It’s that mutual trust that you obtain right here at Georgia Southern, it’s those relationships you’ve made. And trust, ladies and gentlemen, is the most important

thing. If you say you’re going to do it, you have to do it.”

Along with trust, Smith said, is expertise. “You are a perfect example of that by graduating from college and getting advanced degrees. I’ve been in the Army for 30 years but I am still learning. Every day take time to learn something new. Every day take time to meet someone new, and you’ll find out how special your graduation and how special your time at Georgia Southern was and will continue to be.”

Honorable service, keeping a positive spirit, being a good steward and knowing one’s talents are several other keys to success, he said.

“You can achieve whatever you want to achieve. Use whatever your perceived obstacle is to achieve the goal that you want to achieve ... You can do it, Eagle Nation.”

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu